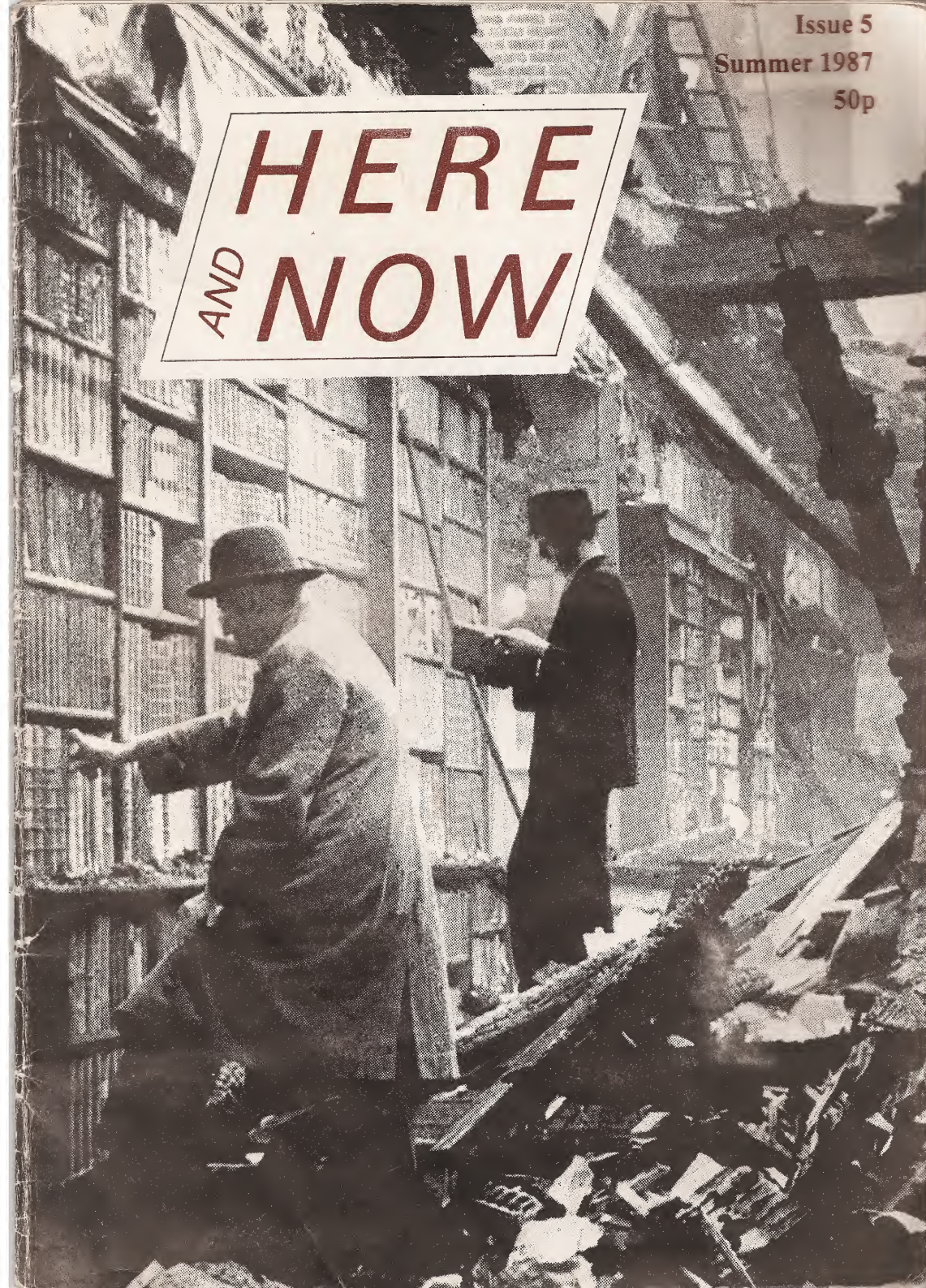


Issue 5

Summer 1987

50p

HERE AND NOW



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Here and Now

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Management of Schooling;
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and Sites of Social Struggle;
Postwar Theory and Events;
Kampuchean Communism;
Lifestylism.

No. 2 (Summer 1985)

Fifth Generation Computing;
The Remaking of the Community;
Effects of Commodification on Individual and Project;
Critiques of Germaine Greer and Paul Cardan.

No. 3 (Spring 1986)

New Lines in the Leftist Marketplace;
Perceptions of the Riots;
Animal Liberation Movements;
Poland 1980-86;
The Nomenklatura in the USSR;
Critique of Christopher Lasch.

No. 4 (Winter 1986/7)

The Invasion of Exchange
Murray Bookchin: Libertarian Municipalism;
West German Greens;
Jean Baudrillard and Politics.

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Editorial

Everywhere in the world, capitalism is triumphant. Under the banner of private enterprise, prices and profit, Capital has routed its enemies - those whose opposition has been carried out in the name of 'Socialism' - and banished all thought of different possibilities. From the radical conservatism of the UK, France and the USA to Gorbachev's *perestroika* (restructuring) in the USSR and the Chinese Responsibility System, the same reinvigoration of capitalist social relations is taking place. Everyone is learning to think of personal freedom solely in terms of *market choices*, and to identify 'society' in terms of the nation state, while nobody, it seems, is asking what kind of life we are being trained for or what we can actually do to determine the future ourselves.

What is disturbing is to find so little serious interest among the Libertarian Left in what is actually happening in the world today. An inflexible conventionalism marks both the thinking and the activities of those who claim to be forces for change, while it is the Right which is confidently promoting a profound social and cultural transformation.

One of the main articles in *Here & Now* No. 4 was 'The Invasion of Exchange' contributed by The Pleasure Tendency, based in Leeds. This article began to map out the changes currently taking place under the auspices of the 'Enterprise Culture' and these we intend to explore further in subsequent issues.

The present issue addresses itself to the form of life presently unfolding with the revitalisation of capitalism, and seeks to re-establish the possibilities for new forms of radical theory and practice.

In 'The Power of the Powerless', Steve Bushell examines the relevance of the work the Czech dissident Vaclav Havel for the anti-capitalist opposition in the West, and finds a central theme to be the complicity of individuals with systems of power. He affirms the political importance of individual responsibility and personal integrity. This reassertion of concept of the 'Moral Subject' clearly throws open serious questions rarely asked about the character of political practice on the left.

A further way in which radical theory has fallen short of people's actual experience is in its under-valuation of the symbolic aspects of social life. Radical ideas which have emerged from the realm of art and culture may seem to have had a greater grasp on this than economic or political theories as such. Three articles in the present issue explore this dimension: 'Gift Against Commodity' by Deborah Jenkins discusses the subtle preservation of the symbolic exchanges on which human reciprocity is founded by the extension of the logic of the commodity and exchange-value; while Mike Peters in 'Noted on Credit' addresses the symbolism immanent in capitalist economic relations themselves, arguing that the purest form of capital - that represented by finance-reveals money itself to be essentially a symbolic expression of power; 'Art and Fashion in the Age of Exchange', by Peter Suchin, discusses the subordination of critical thought today to the logic of fashion and the corruption of the 'radical' pretensions of artistic work ensnared in the hypersophisticated banalities of 'Postmodernism'.

The endless proliferation of pseudo-novelties in the domains of culture and academic theory extends also into politics. Impatience for the supposedly new calls for a clearer understanding of what is really specific to the present, and of how the present is really placed in relation to the past. In 'The Third Assault', Gus McDonald proposes a brief overview of the history of radical theory in the form of a schematic framework of three stages. This constitutes an extract from work-in-progress and is intended as a basis for discussion and debate. Replies to this will be published in the next issue.

The social forces working to change present day society are often identified as being the feminist, black, ecological and peace movements (the 'New Social Movements' popular in European Social Theory) - as if these, and other collective identities, existed outside of capitalist commodity relations and conferred a privileged basis for transcending those relations. Colin Webster, in his article, considers the claims for this transcendent potential of such movements in a more skeptical way.



The Power of the Powerless



On Twelfth Night, ten years ago, a white Saab was stopped by a number of police cars in downtown Prague. During the search that followed about 250 envelopes, ready for posting, were discovered. Inside the envelopes was a document which heralded a thaw in the Central European condition which has remained unfrozen to this day. The document was Charta 77 (which fortunately had other means to arrive at its rightful destination) and the occupants of the car, who were released shortly after midnight, were Pavel Landovsky, actor and playwright, Ludvik Vaculik, novelist, and Vaclav Havel, playwright.

Histories of the Charta 77 phenomenon are available for anyone who is interested¹. Suffice to say it did not seize power, it did not inaugurate workers' revolution, and not one drop of the oppressor's blood was shed in its name. Instead it suffered and continues to suffer repression, vilification, and the kind of mundane and random persecution which ordinary people find most hard to bear. Hardly, viewed from the machiavellian perch of modern politics, a success, yet in its pluralism, its staying power, its tactics and its principles it has shown a way out, not only for Central Europe, but for all who labour under the systems of totality which characterise societies in our world.

In 1978 Vaclav Havel wrote 'The Power of the Powerless'². Within these pages can be found much of the character of Charta 77, as well as Havel's own analysis of the Central European condition. I am not going to review it in the traditional sense, I am going to take far greater liberties with it than that. I propose to attempt to apply both the spirit and the advice contained in this book to this side of the Iron Curtain, and I hope to do it without

diminishing Havel's specific indictment of 'post-totalitarian society'^{*}, nor by pretending that all systems are the same anyway. Havel's essay does look in our direction, not only in his recognition of the Western sources of the totalitarianism of the 'East', but also in his awareness (in a passage which irritated a *Spectator* reviewer) of the dangers inherent within the present West:

In highly simplified terms, it could be said that the post-totalitarian system has been built on foundations laid by the historical encounter between dictatorship and the consumer society. Is it not true that the far-reaching adaptability to living a lie and the effortless spread of social auto-totally have some connection with the general unwillingness of consumption-orientated people to sacrifice some material certainties for the sake of their own spiritual and moral integrity? With their willingness to surrender higher values when faced with the trivializing temptations of modern civilisation? With their vulnerability to the attractions of mass indifference? And, in the end, is not the greyness and emptiness of life in the post-totalitarian system only an inflated caricature of modern life in general? And do we not in fact stand (although in the external measures of civilisation we are far behind) as a kind of warning to the West, revealing to it its own latent tendencies? (page 39)

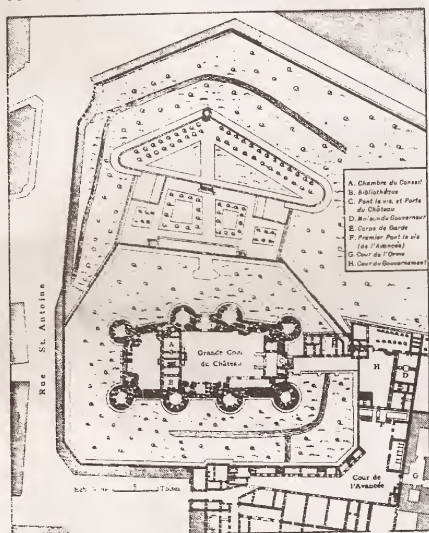
^{*} Havel's phrase for the socialist societies of today.

In *Here and Now No. 1* T.D. quoted Milan Kundera's description of Prague '68 as the expression of 'post-revolutionary scepticism' and concluded with Nadine Gordimer's question:

Communism has turned out not to be just or humane either; has failed, even more cruelly than capitalism. Does this mean that we have to tell the poor and the dispossessed of the world there is nothing to be done...?

I would suggest, now, that the scepticism is not confined to Prague and that it is within communism's failure that something can indeed be found to be done.

In our society I sense a growing belief in the futility of radical political action. Explanations for this can run from an appreciation of the international nature of mega-politics (the fear of offending one's 'friends', for us, the U.S.) to actual experience of attempting change (from the hippies of the sixties to the miners of the eighties). The result is that a dull hangover besets public action, ritual presides over reason, cynicism over hope, 'keeping-your-head-down' over making a stand. Post-revolutionary scepticism is not confined to the Eastern bloc (we, too, have had our 'revolutions') and the consequences of communism are not unapparent to us.



PLAN OF THE BASTILLE

What Havel does, however, is identify the nature of modern power, its subtle and seductive nature, and presents us with ways of resistance which take into account post-revolutionary scepticism and the history of lost illusions. I should add that in his presentation of resistance he is merely describing what is already taking place. For Havel, what is so drastic about modern forms of power is that it presents itself as a Scientific Truth, with claims which overwhelm humanity's past reliance on right and wrong which finds its roots in human experience. Power sees itself as beyond good and evil. It is a self-generating utilitarian machine which enlists humanity into its service by claiming to satisfy the real and imponderable problems of people:

To wandering humanity it offers an immediately available home: all one has to do is accept it, and suddenly everything becomes clear once more, life takes on new meaning, and all mysteries, unanswered questions, anxiety, and loneliness vanish. Of course, one pays dearly for this low-rent home: the price is abdication of one's own reason, conscience and responsibility, for an essential aspect of this ideology is the consignment of reason and conscience to a higher authority. The principle involved here is that the centre of power is identical with the centre of truth. (page 25)

There is a peculiar aura of innocence around the system, because of its ideology that it is simply the rational technology of power. And with the spurious innocence of the system comes the concomitant complicity of every individual with it. It is not then, a structural change which could improve human life in the system, because the crucial line of conflict exists not at the structural but at the individual level. It runs right through each individual, such that everyone is both a victim and a supporter of the system. Differing positions in the hierarchy merely establish degrees of involvement.

The assumption which runs throughout Havel's book is that the individual exists. Not the bourgeois individual of acquisitive bent nor its modern narcissistic counterpart, but an individual in which 'there is some longing for humanity's rightful dignity, for moral integrity, for free expression of being and a sense of transcendence over the world of existences'. This individual has moral choice, the choice of living within the lie or living within the truth. The onus of responsibility for the 'system' is located within the person:

Human beings are compelled to live within a lie, but they can be compelled to do so only because they are in fact capable of living in this way. Therefore not only does the system alienate humanity, but at the same time alienated humanity supports this system as its own involuntary masterplan, as a degenerate image of its own degeneration, as a record of people's failures as individuals. (page 38)

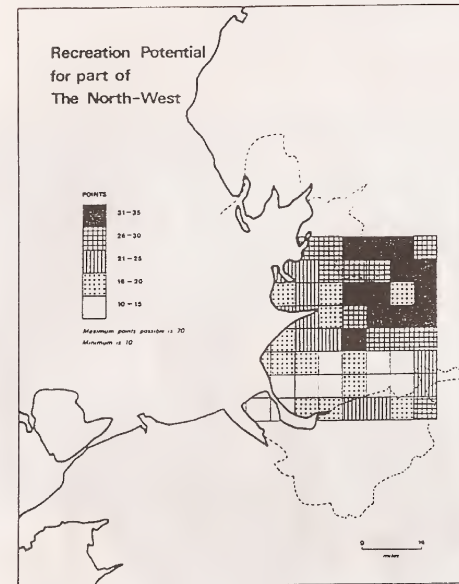
Rather than find a better system to create better lives for people, by living better lives will a better system come into being.

This reawakening of the notion of personal responsibility for the way one lives is not some crass finger-pointing at the failure of the masses to perform, but a recognition by Havel of how much the system's automatism fills our everyday lives with its petty imperatives and ritualised relationships; how the seemingly neutral and innocent acts of the everyday fuel the very arrangement that stifles our being.

Havel's reclamation of the individual, as something far richer than the 'subject' constructed by the sterile materialisms of either official Marxism or the 'rational choice school', acts a swathe through the partial individualisms of Western Europe and America, where the individual is barely recognisable as a full human being. There, his role in public affairs is diminished, rarely outside the confines of the family is he asked to perform an adult as opposed to infantile task (in fact the assumption is that the modern subject has hardly matured). What little social connections he does have amount to little more than membership of a community of consumers, so that, to use Havel's words, he is as far from realising his longing for rightful dignity, for moral integrity and a sense of transcendence as his Central European counterpart.

Similarly, Havel's identification of the individual complicity upon which the system runs mirrors the self-administered economic conformity by which the Western powers exist. The dominance of the notion of exchange-value as a natural, given and external relation between people which enables other relations to be marginalised to the boundaries of, at best, eccentricity, and at worst, criminality (as the hounding of The Travellers throughout the eighties has shown) exists because it is accepted as Truth, the one truth which does not founder on the shifting sandbanks of human uncertainty. To my knowledge, Havel has no critique of the commodity, but his description of the way his system functions has a familiar ring:

Part of the essence of the post-totalitarian system is that it draws everyone into its sphere of power, not so they may realise themselves as human beings, but so they may surrender their human identity in favour of the identity of the system, that is, so they may become agents of the system's general automatism and servants of its self-



determined goals, so they may participate in the common responsibility for it, so they may be pulled into and ensnared by it, like Faust with Mephistopheles. More than this: so they may create through their involvement a general norm and thus, bring pressure to bear on their fellow citizens. And further: so they may learn to be comfortable with their involvement, to identify with it as though it were something natural and inevitable and, ultimately, so they may - with no external urging - come to treat any non-involvement as an abnormality, as arrogance, as an attack on themselves, as a form of dropping out of society. By pulling everyone into its power structure, the post-totalitarian system makes everyone instruments of a mutual totality, the auto-totality of society.

Is this not our condition too? Is this not a fairer description of the mass conformity around us, than some Baudrillardian notion which makes a virtue out of this 'necessity'? Submerged beneath the Leftist cant about the balance of forces between Capital and Labour, is it not true that the problem which faces us as enemies of exchange-value, is the almost universal belief in it?

Havel's understanding of society yields consequences, a rare and refreshing upshot in contrast to most contemporary theory. Having pin-pointed the moral life of the individual as the lynchpin of society's functioning or not, he considers the opportunities of the individual for 'living within the truth'. I can imagine at this point, much unease at the a priori assumptions of Havel, like his idea of truth, which he does not define except to place it as in the natural world, and his idea of the individual with its moral and transcendental claims. Without engaging in a long digression, I accept both a priori views as the crucial vantage-point from which we view the world and ourselves, without which we are cast adrift on the seas of whim, chance and meaninglessness.

The consequences of seeing individuals as having actually existing freedom no matter what, leads to a broadening and deepening of what has been called in the West, dissidence. For dissidence in this sense is no longer confined to the writings of intellectuals or demands for reforms in the system, but exists as a possibility for everyone. 'Dissidence' includes all the unsung acts of integrity, trust and independence in a society based on the negation of such virtues. At its most dramatic it hints of a 'parallel polis', the regeneration of a public sphere poisoned by cynicism and careerism; at its most humdrum, but none the less

meaningful for that, it is the quiet courage of the brewmaster victimised because he suggests a better way for brewing beer. In telling the truth, Havel says, he had become the 'dissident' of the Eastern Bohemian Brewery. 'Dissidents' can be found on every street-corner. The genuine aims of life stir beneath the automatic functioning of the system.

In the same way, I consider, when facing the spurious universality of the commodity, with its flattening out of human beings into soul-less 'demanders' and 'suppliers', that 'small-scale work' (the surreptitious survival of gift, acts of trust, transcendence of money-thinking, the refusal to con or seduce another) takes its place not merely as part of a hypothetical opposition, but as life lived within the truth, as its own justification. It needs serve no political cause. And, of course, with our experience of a public sphere plagued by the manipulation of emotions, the 'pseudo-science' of signs and the death of honesty, the notion of a parallel polis (an alternative realm of public debate) appears not merely attractive but essential. The emergence of the citizen, neither bourgeois, proletarian, nor the carrier of any other spurious identity, prepared to accept the responsibility of the existence of others, could animate a parallel public sphere to a quality that could replace the cynical glitz of the official, without passing through the bloody experience which seems to have marked most significant transformations this century.

The absence of hate, or at least of hate-as-a-virtue ideology, marks out Havel, Charta 77 and the Polish movements from previous expressions of a deep-seated desire for change. It should not be confused with pacifism which Havel regards as craven submission; if nothing is worth dying for, then nothing is worth living for. But it is a turn-away from the ruthless politics of power, a recognition of the experience of such politics and a rediscovery of values such as redemption and forgiveness³. In part this comes from experiencing the endless cycle of oppression-rebellion-oppression, and is an attempt to break out of this by never allowing the ends to justify any means, in part it is Central European post-revolutionary scepticism. Having experienced the Millennium, the genesis of the end of uncertainty, they have found it wanting in humanity, engaged as it had to be in Procrustean surgery to replace the human with the prosthesis of Socialist Man. For Havel, there will never be a cause that can demand and justify a single involuntary death. Human perfection is not on the agenda, therefore not anything can be done in its name. This revolutionary fastidiousness is the result of having a view of the limits of the human condition.

According to Havel these limits exist in nature; just as we are constrained by ecology as to what we can do with our environment, so we are constrained by our nature as to what we can do with our humanity. Technological hubris and unhinged individualism are seen as going together. Technology is:

the symbol of an age which seeks to transcend the boundaries of the natural world and its norms and to make it into a merely private concern, a matter of subjective preference and private feeling, of the illusions, prejudices and whims of a mere individual. (Politics and Conscience)⁴

Havel sees the fulfilment of the individual as dependent upon the transcendence of individual desire. Such sentiments run against the tide of modern Western politics, with the possible exception of the Greens (with whom Havel does admit some affinity). The notion of a universal human condition is not one readily accepted by modernist radicals, who have always seen such ideas as emanating firmly from the conservative camp. However, it would seem that the experience of the century will point to the need for firmer grounding of what the genuine aims of life are other than the elevation of *personal* desire (whomsoever might be doing the elevating, Mrs. Thatcher or Raoul Vaneigem), and most certainly the funeral bell has been tolling long and hard for those ideologies which have proclaimed the end of moral dilemmas, the end of uncertainty, and the institution of Paradise where subject shall lie down with object in dissolutive harmony. This is the end of the end of History; a recognition of the eternal recurrence of struggle.



Défense de s'asseoir
No sitting

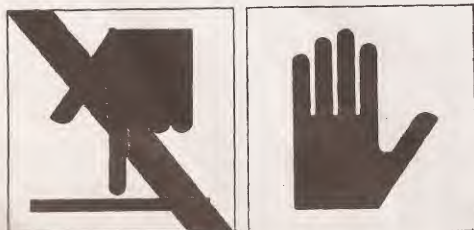
Défense de rester debout
No standing

In many ways *The Power of the Powerless* is a descriptive, rather than theoretical work, or rather, as the best theory often is, it merely describes what is already happening. In its scepticism tempered by transcendence it translates the perceived absence of revolutionary modernism in Central Europe into very good, very common, sense. Although it does not preclude combative struggle, in fact it is 'living within the truth' upon which such struggle depends, the experience of the Czech and Polish movements undermine the pride of place given the combative personality. The power of the powerless exists in the everyday refusals to live within the lie rather than in the purity of a grand ideologue, who challenges all in theory and very little in practice. Havel gives us a principle about how to fight totalities, without instituting our own, by identifying the human, rather than science or history as the source of society.

Central Europeans (and their Soviet counterparts) have discovered that no matter how dark and how total oppression appears, the heart of real life still beats, and exists as a constant potential challenge to Power. That beating heart can be found in our system too, in the practices that side-step power and money. Escaping the purism of 'collision-course' politics and its inevitable marginalisation, these practices suggest a 'non-normalising' unity between people; one in which both the dispossessed rioter and the incarcerated pensioner could find a home. Outside the confines of conventional politics another future could be born:

For the real question is whether the 'brighter future' is really always so distant. What if, on the contrary, it has been here for a long time already, and only our blindness and weakness has prevented us from seeing it around us and within us, and kept us from developing it? (The last lines of *The Power of the Powerless*).

Steve Bushell



Défense de toucher
Don't touch

Entrée interdite
No admission

Notes.

1. Contrary to popular prejudice Charta 77 was not simply an intellectuals' movement, but always had a large section of working-class signatories, which at times formed the majority. Recommended history: *Charta 77 and Human Rights in Czechoslovakia*. Skilling.

2. Circulated throughout Czechoslovakia in *samizdat* form, it sparked off further debate and discussion. Published in English by Hutchinson (Palach Press) at a prohibitive price in 1985. If anyone wants to read it, they can borrow a copy from me, if they write to The Pleasure Tendency, P.O. Box 109, Leeds LS5 3AA. Vaclav Havel was released from prison in 1983, after serving four years for membership of the Committee to Defend the Unjustly Persecuted.

3. Adam Michnik, a Polish 'dissident', writes in his letter from Warsaw Prison to General Kiszczak:

As for myself, I hope that when your life is in danger, I will be able to appear in time to help you as I did in Otwock when I helped save the lives of those few of your subordinates, that I will be able to place myself once again on the side of the victims and not that of the victimizers. Even if, afterward, you should once more wonder at my incorrigible stupidity and decide to lock me back in prison all over again.

The celebrated incident at Otwock occurred when a crowd attempting to lynch a policeman was calmed by Michnik's dramatic intervention. His opening sentence began:

'Listen to me, my name is Adam Michnik and I am an Anti-Socialist Force.'

4. 'Politics and Conscience': address by Havel to the University of Toulouse, which he was unable to deliver in person, February 1984. (translated and published by *The Salisbury Review*).



Gift Against Commodity

'But it is a cold, lifeless business when you go to the shops to buy me something, which does not represent your life and talent, but a goldsmith's. This is fit for kings and rich men who represent kings, and a false state of property, to make presents of gold and silver stuffs, as a kind of symbolic sin-offering, or payment of blackmail.'

R. W. Emerson 'Gifts'
(from Emerson's Essays and Representative Men)

A couple of months ago, a local news programme carried a report on the Queen's birthday. A reporter was sent to interview local primary school children on what they thought about the Queen having two birthdays. Naturally, they all said it was a splendid idea! One of the questions put to them was: "If you could afford anything in the world, what would you like to buy the Queen for her birthday?" What rendered the question meaningless was the way that it turned the whole notion of *gift* on its head. Had the question been worded: "What in the world would you most like to *give* the Queen for her birthday?" (Which, after all, was the question that *was* being asked), it would have had a completely different sense. We have come to associate the notions of 'buying' and 'giving' in our minds to the point where we no longer clearly recognise the totally opposing implications that they have with regard to human relationships. 'Buying' and 'giving' involve different levels of transaction and, consequently, when we attempt to combine them in one notion, for example, that of 'gift', it can have a distorting effect on the personal relationships between human beings.

There exists, for example, at the moment of presentation of a gift, a very delicate balance in the relationship between the giver and the receiver - a balance of power and mutual respect - and, although the roles are different, it is not by any means a one-sided relationship. One is bound by the obligation to accept a gift when its presentation is inspired by an assumed obligation to offer one; and there is, as everyone knows, as much enjoyment to be had from giving as there is from receiving. However, should this relationship be in any way undermined, then the balance is likely to be upset. If, for example, the primary concern in a transaction of gift-exchange becomes the 'cost' of the gift, as is often the case, then the relationship does become fundamentally altered. The intervention of an external, arbitrary measure of value - money - brings about a mediated human relationship which has its form of value imposed on it from the outside - by the system itself. It is the fixed value of the commodity which interposes itself and governs the relationship between giver and receiver.

Thus, a gift that appears too 'cheap' or too 'expensive' causes embarrassment and necessitates excuses on both sides. Phrases such as "I'm sorry it's not much" and "It's the thought that counts" are answered by those such as "You shouldn't have bothered" and "Really, I wasn't expecting anything". The relationship immediately becomes unidimensional and characterised by a sort of dishonesty. The balance of power is tilted provocatively one way or the other - the person who buys the extravagantly expensive gift feels a reassuring sense of

superiority whilst, conversely, the humble bearer of a cheap gift waits to be forgiven by its recipient. Mutual respect turns to one-sided disdain or humility. The bond created by the obligation to give and to receive is weakened and, consequently, so too is the relationship of respect between the individuals.

This type of power relationship is more reminiscent of the 'potlatch' system of certain North American Indian communities, where the wealth and status of the chief or clan is demonstrated by the lavish distribution of gifts and the destruction of property. Its awkwardness - within society - is dominated by commodity exchange can be seen in Canada where Indians were forbidden by law to perform potlatch in 1921. This representation of wealth involves a hierarchically structured system of gift-exchange, the primary purpose of which is to signify power over others. The notion of gift-exchange in our society is often usurped by those with similar intentions, as it is indeed strangled by the commodity system itself, in order that the system's logic of 'equivalence' may remain unchallenged.

With regard to human relationships, there is a shift of emphasis which occurs when the notion of *gift* becomes synonymous with the notion of 'buying' rather than that of 'giving'. This shift is moving away from the human centre which a transaction of gift-exchange signifies in terms of the personal relationship, towards the 'value', in commodity terms, of the gift itself. When choosing a gift nowadays, the tendency is to put greater emphasis on finding something which appears to be more expensive than it actually is, rather than choosing something appropriate. What is appropriate, of course, will vary depending not only on who it is being chosen for, but also on the nature of the relationship which exists between the giver and the receiver of the gift. The 'appropriate' gift becomes the sign which represents that relationship and, thus, its intrinsic worth. The 'cost' of the gift, however, is not dependent upon the relationship but it is increasingly with this 'fixed' notion of value that our interest lies because it is at the heart of the system of exchange on which our society is based. It is becoming more and more difficult to maintain a notion of a system of gift-exchange in which, in our everyday transactions with others, we have little choice but to participate. The notion of the commodity attempts to invade every area of our lives. With the emergence of endless 'gift-shops', selling useless and hideous gifts suitable for everyone and every occasion, the notion of 'appropriateness' has been reduced to a categorisation of the commodity itself - 'appropriate' as a gift, it finds its place in the market. Presents are sold ready 'gift-wrapped' with all the trimmings. Advertisements in shop windows and magazines ring out with ideas for the 'perfect present for him' and the 'ideal gift for her'. The ideal gift, perhaps, but hardly the gift ideal. The emphasis is on no longer having to think about what to give and the very meaning of the phrase 'It's the thought that counts' is rendered redundant by a market that does our thinking for us.

We are left with a difficult situation: to come up with the perfect birthday present these days we must bear so many things in mind. It is no longer accepted as good enough to make something of our own because, unless one is blessed with great handicrafting skills, one is most likely simply to appear too mean

to go out and buy something. We must not, on the other hand, spend too much for fear of appearing too 'flashy' and running the risk of causing great embarrassment. It seems that the act of giving is no longer the most important element in a transaction of gift-exchange.

Other criteria are imposed from outside, as though the system of commodity-exchange is unable to allow the existence of any levels of human interaction which are not completely under its control.

It snatches them from us, gift-wraps them up in its own glittering paper (as well as in a symbolism that is no longer our own) and offers them back to us at its own price. Everything must be brought under its own sphere - nothing must weaken its unifying strategy.

Gifts rail against the rationalist economic system of the commodity in that they preserve the notion of 'difference' in both content and form. In contrast, the commodity seeks to reduce qualitative difference, expressive of a relationship, to a relationship expressive of quantitative difference. But, despite the commodification of 'gift' in our society, we can still join Marcel Mauss in believing that 'it is our good fortune that all is not yet couched in terms of purchase and sale'**. Discovering means of protecting gift without transforming it into 'the unique commodity' par excellence - a precipice upon which it is always trembling in modern times - could halt its drift into the realm of nostalgia.

Deborah Jenkins

* M. Mauss *The Gift* (London 1966)

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Breakfast - Good start
day with just a glass of apple juice - only 50 calories!

Lunch - It's important to keep up your energy so you have a delicious tomato salad and a baked potato with all the sauce - about 300 calories, so still plenty to go.

Dinner - Famed after a hard day, so start off with some Minestrone soup, followed by Pizza - 640 calories.

Evening - Tot up your calories and discover you're still 510 in 'credit'. Spoil yourself with that Mars Bar you've wanted all day!

Real leather purse personalised with up to 3 of your initials at no extra cost.

Description: Calorie Cash
Price: £11.44 (inc. £1.45 p&p)
Code: 430425

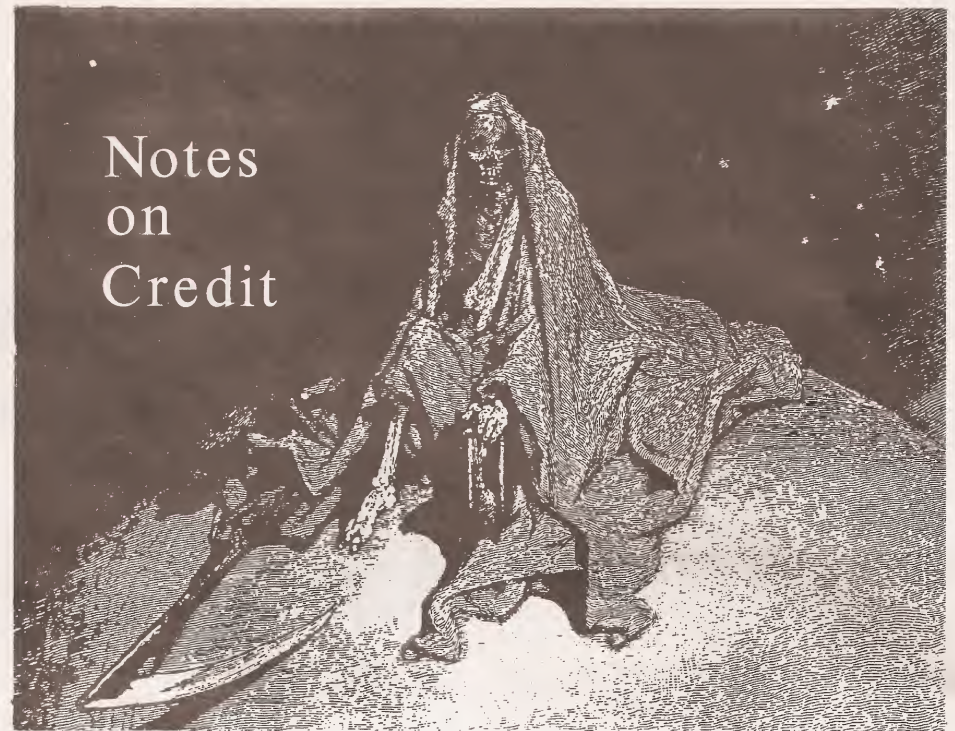
Scotcade

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Notes on Credit



There is a lot of loose talk now about the Credit Explosion, and the Burden of Debt, both in this country and in the world at large. The Labour Party in particular has been arguing that the present consumer boom is solely based on credit, and thus is both shallow and likely to be short-lived, and even portends an inevitable 'Day of Reckoning' - a crash or catastrophe of some sort. A familiar set of phrases accompany this kind of analysis: 'paper profits', 'funny money', 'phoney jobs' (as against 'real' jobs), 'making money as against making things' etc.

This moralising materialism is, of course, based on a (partially) correct sense of the fundamentally anti-social and insecure character of capitalism, but it is vitiated by a (wholly) unsound grasp of the *culture* of capitalism, and betrays a complete failure to investigate or challenge the social *meaning* of the 'wealth' to which capitalism is devoted. In the notes below, I'd like to take the critique of credit and debt a bit further than is usually done by economists - whether 'bourgeois' or 'marxist' - and try to consider credit and debt as a *SOCIAL RELATION*: that is, as a relation of *power* replete with ideological symbolism.

But first: some figures indicating the scale of debt today. We are getting used to being told about the sheer extent of indebtedness in the world. The issue is not confined to the Third World. While Argentina, for example, is said to 'owe' some \$52 billion to the international bankers, and is thus in the big league of debtor nations, the United States itself nominally owes about \$200 billion to creditors in other countries. Among the other indicators of American indebtedness are an estimated Federal Government debt of \$2.1 trillion and a total U.S. *consumer* debt of \$2.2 trillion (compared to a total debt on the part of the Less Developed Countries of only \$1 trillion). If these figures make your eyes glaze over, don't worry. The ultimate meaning of such incalculable magnitudes lies in the social consequences rather than the numbers themselves.

On a more down-to-earth level, the growth of *personal* debt in the U.K. has been put at about 20% a year (compared to an annual growth in wages of only 7%); the average household debt in Britain is currently around £2,000, and the *INTEREST* on such debt is equivalent to some 9% of all household income.

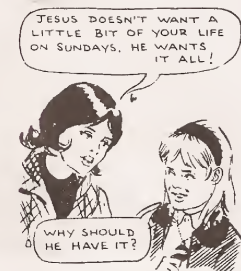
What is Credit?

To inhabitants of a society of consumption, credit presents itself to us, as Baudrillard says*, as something we are being "offered". It is portrayed as a facility for enhanced consumption as much as a requirement of production - and almost as one of the entitlements of the consuming citizen.

But we all know these enticements for the services of such flexible friends simply camouflage the figure of the old familiar archetype of the Shylock, who only lends in order to entrap us in the bonds of his interest.

What is so hard to grasp about credit and interest, though, is neither its underlying motive nor the arithmetic of the percentages as such by which we can easily work out our respective costs and benefits, but rather the nature of the credit relation itself and how it is enforced.

Interest is not the 'price' of what is lent, because only things which are actually sold - alienated - have a price, and whoever lends money does not renounce what he appears to hand over. In fact when money is represented as being lent, nothing in fact is changing hands at all. When a bank agrees to lend you money, you are not handed a pile of notes in a brown envelope or anything which can be constructed as a transfer of possession as



The Warrior Gang WEO Youth

when a book or car or house are sold. What usually happens when a loan is made is that a contractual *relation* is entered into which circumscribes the power of the debtor*. What the borrower *gets* is something much more conditional than the current terminology suggests. In effect what takes place is a transaction very much like a feudal 'contract' in which there is reciprocity but no symmetry. If you are an entrepreneur, you may or not use the money to make a profit, but the bank will get its return, come what may.

Let's look at this further. What is very rarely considered is that in making money loans, banks are actually *creating* credit: which amounts to saying they are inventing money which did not previously exist. This may sound familiar enough to students of economics, but some of the forms of credit-creation which have expanded most dramatically in recent years - specifically that represented by credit cards - have somehow been forgotten about by both economists and governments. The vast increase in the use of credit cards (and this includes a large part of the way executives are remunerated) nowhere figures in official calculations of the 'Money Supply'.

Credit/Debt as a Moral Category

It is a truism to point out that debt was once considered morally disreputable; there are still many people who disapprove of buying things 'on tick', and who would never dream of possessing a credit card. It is quite arrogant and highly presumptuous of contemporary commentators to mock such attitudes in the condescending tone which suggests that we have a greater insight into reality than those poor benighted people with those antiquated prejudices.

I want to suggest that there are moral ideas embedded in the categories of debt and credit, and that the old-fashioned anathema of debt contains a more profound sense of what credit is all about than the sophisticated 'technical' discourse about the nature of money, credit and interest which comes from economists.

After all, what does it actually *mean* to say that someone 'owes' something else to someone else but to posit that some sort of *obligation* is in fact in force upon that person. Hidden behind the fettered phenomena of the Commodity/Money system, in which it appears that prices are the objective material properties of goods, and the circulation of goods obeys natural laws that can be entirely explained by a 'science' called economics, is the irreducibly social fact that goods serve as the mediation of human activities: the system of commodities doesn't make 'morality' disappear; it rests on moral notions which predate it, and it generates its own moralities. The system may in practice violate its own morality, but that doesn't mean that morality can be eschewed as irrelevant.

What is the moral basis of the critique of credit? Quite simply it is that what appears as the 'giving' of something is really the imposition of an obligation - an obligation, moreover which doesn't conform to any norms of reciprocity, since it is not true that anything is actually given at all.

* This relation between debt and power can be seen in the Ancient Roman *nexum* (bondage) whereby a person who could not repay a loan forfeited their status as a free person and entered - literally - into slavery.

Consider the way the medieval taboo on 'usury' (interest) was phrased:

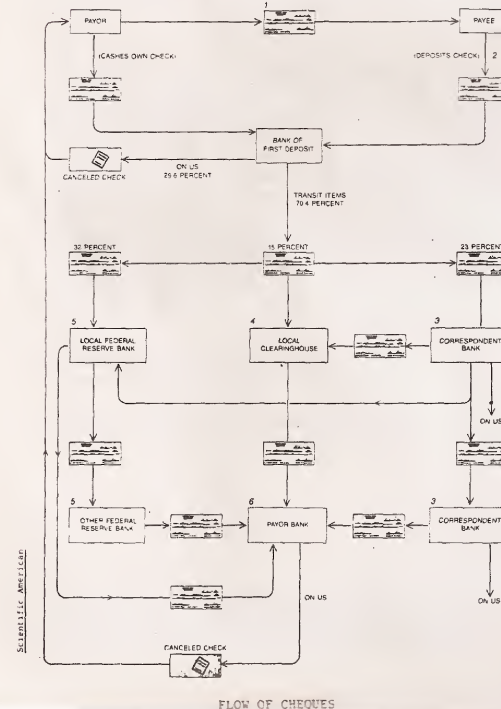
'To receive usury for money lent, in itself, unjust, since it is a sale of what does not exist; whereby inequality obviously results, which is contrary to justice'

(Thomas Aquinas *Summa Theologica* Question LXXVIII, Article 1, 1264, quoted in Eugen Weber (ed) *The Western Tradition* vol 1 (D.C. Heath & Co. 1972 p. 283

.... it is monstrous and unnatural that an infertile thing should give birth, that a thing specifically sterile, such as money, should bear fruit and multiply itself. Therefore, when profit is made for money, not by laying it out in the purchase of natural wealth, its proper and natural use, but changing it into itself, as changing one form of it for another, or giving one form for another, such profit is vile and unnatural.

Nicholas Oresme *De Moneta (On Money)* c. 1354 (Ed. Charles Johnson, Thomas Nelson, London 1956 p. 25).

Similarly, in ancient communities the charging of interest was prohibited on loans between members of the same community; the Jews condemned the charging of interest from fellow Jews in the same way as other peoples did (the association between the Jews and money-lending only arose out of the position they found themselves forced into in medieval Europe, where they were permitted to break the Christian taboo on usury and were then ripped off by their 'Christian' overlords, this 'dirty' money being legitimised by legal theft after the fact).



What the medieval theologians found abhorrent in usury is nevertheless still of relevance. It was abhorrence of the hegemony of inanimate things over human life, and of the inexplicable power of intellectual categories (interest is a purely mathematical notion) over real social and above all, moral, obligations. The fundamental social problem we still confront is that the imaginary necessity which 'requires' that a *debt* be paid (or that 'interest charges' *must* be deducted) does seem to be stronger than the moral necessity for the hungry to be fed.

The theological critique seems more apposite than economic one. It is not unrelated to the religious anathema against sorcery and magic: the imputation to things, to objects, of divine powers.

That *money* (conceived in the middle ages in its material form as coinage) could somehow appear to bring forth its own automatic increase, that the mere possession of money could bring an unconditional increment of real wealth, regardless of the social role or moral virtue of its possessors, was a violation of Christianity like the belief that certain magical objects could be used to bind spiritual forces by mechanical causality.

The well-known paradox of compound interest - the geometrical progression by which, as the adage goes, if Jesus had invested a penny at 10% interest he would now own the whole world, expresses the difficulty of comprehending the ethical basis of interest upon credit and behind this, the ontological status of money as capital. It is the height of folly to pretend that the modern mind understands these things any better than the medieval mind.

Money is something profoundly 'magical' and 'superstitious', as Marx was at such pains to emphasise by invoking the concept of 'fetishism'.

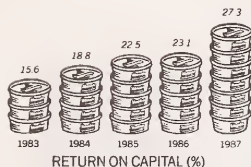
The modern idea that money is simply a notational device simply flies in the face of the reality of money and how it is in fact treated in capitalist society. People just do *not* behave that way.

Money and Magic

In 1914, the French anthropologist Marcel Mauss put forward the suggestion that the concept of money, as it functions within everyday social consciousness, is directly related to, indeed is historically rooted in, the notion of *magical power*.*

*Mauss 'Origines de la notion de la Monnaie' in *Oeuvres* vol. 2 ed. Victor Karady (Minuit 1968) pp. 106 - 112. Mauss's argument has been more or less confirmed by later scholars. See Pierre Vilar *A History of Gold and Money* (Verso 1984; 1st Spanish edition 1969) p. 23; Simon Smelt 'Money's place in Society' *British Journal of Sociology* XXXI No. 2 June 1980, p. 206.

The thesis is brilliantly elaborated in Daniel O'Keefe *Stolen Lightning: A Social Theory of Magic* (Martin Robertson, 1982) esp. p. 275 ff.



After illustrating various notions of such a magical force in several non-European societies, Mauss pointed out that the objects deemed to be endowed with these magical properties were usually objects which played a role in *symbolic exchanges* in those societies: they function at the centre of social rituals associated with economic and political as well as 'religious' events; the imputation of supernatural power to things derives, in other words, from the symbolic functions the things acquire from their social uses.

He then suggested that this has important similarities with the way the institution of *money* operates in Western societies:

"Money - whatever definition one adopts - is a standard value, it is also a use-value which is not fungible, which is permanent, transmissible, which can be the object of transactions and uses without being deteriorated, but which can be the means of procuring other fungible, transitory values, possessions, benefits. Now the *talisman* and its possession have ... played this role as objects coveted equally by all, and whose possession conferred on their holder a power which became easily a *purchasing power*".

This magical power, however, is a *social* power. Ideas of a magical force such as the classic Polynesian category of 'mana', are not just believed to reside in material objects and ritual acts, but are the form in which the *social power and authority* of specific human actors is conceived.

The power of a chief, is a real power, symbolising the force of the clan, and this power is imagined to reside in the symbols and insignia of the 'role' of chief.

The earliest form of money, Mauss suggests, were *not* things employed in the acquisition of means of 'consumption' and everyday technical 'utility', but in the acquisition of 'luxury' goods, and especially those of *authority* over other people. The purchasing power of primitive money is first and foremost the *prestige* that the talisman confers on whoever possesses it and which serves as a sign of *command* over others.



CAPITAL EXPLAINS ITSELF

'THE CONTRACT STIPULATES IF THE TOTAL MONTHLY AMOUNT OF LOSS OF TIME BENEFITS PROMISED FOR THE SAME LOSS UNDER ALL VALID LOSS OF TIME COVERAGE UPON THE INSURED PERSON, WHETHER PAYABLE ON A WEEKLY OR MONTHLY BASIS SHALL EXCEED THE MONTHLY EARNINGS OF THE INSURED PERSON AT THE TIME DISABILITY COMMENCED OR HIS AVERAGE MONTHLY EARNINGS FOR THE PERIOD OF TWO YEARS IMMEDIATELY PRECEDING A DISABILITY FOR WHICH CLAIM IS MADE, WHICHEVER IS GREATER, THE COMPANY WILL BE LIABLE ONLY FOR SUCH PORTION AND AMOUNT OF SUCH BENEFITS UNDER THE CERTIFICATE AS THE AMOUNT OF SUCH MONTHLY EARNINGS OR SUCH MONTHLY EARNINGS OF THE INSURED PERSON BEARS TO THE TOTAL AMOUNT OF MONTHLY BENEFITS WITH THE SAME LOSS UNDER ALL SUCH COVERAGE UPON THE INSURED PERSON AT THE TIME OF SUCH DISABILITY COMMENCES AND FOR THE RETURN OF SUCH PART OF THE PREMIUMS PAID DURING SUCH TWO YEARS AS SHALL EXCEED THE PRORATED AMOUNT OF PREMIUMS FOR THE BENEFITS AND REPAID HEREUNDER BUT THIS SHALL NOT OPERATE TO REDUCE TOTAL MONTHLY AMOUNT OF BENEFITS PAYABLE UNDER ALL SUCH COVERAGE UPON THE INSURED PERSON BELOW THE SUM OF \$200, OR THE SUM OF THE MONTHLY BENEFITS SPECIFIED IN SUCH COVERAGE, WHICHEVER IS THE LESSER NOR SHALL IT OPERATE TO REDUCE BENEFITS OTHER THAN THOSE PAYABLE FOR LOSS OF TIME.'

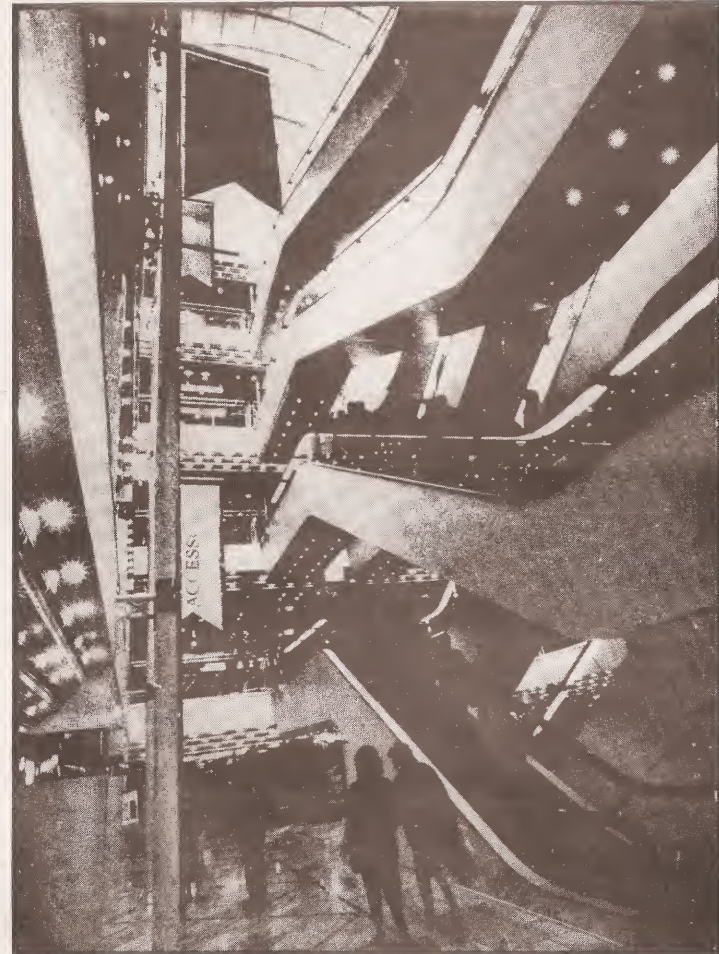
OLD REPUBLIC INSURANCE COMPANY
OF CHICAGO 1978

'But is this not a feeling still very much alive among ourselves? And the faith which we have in gold, and all the values which follow from this valuation, is it not in large part the confidence that we have in its power? The essence of faith in the power of gold resides, does it not, in the belief that we can obtain, thanks to it, from our contemporaries, the benefits - in kind or in services - that the state of the market permits us to demand?'

This magical, symbolic dimension of money is inescapable in the institution of credit. The very idea of 'interest' as a percentage increment upon a sum of money, is the most 'mystified' form of surplus value, as Marx said, and Marx was no less emphatic about the inherently 'occult' character of the everyday notions involved than was Mauss.

It does seem that we live in a system in which human relations are not simply 'represented' by, but are *regulated by*, imaginary arithmetical transfers of numbers across notional 'accounts': thus people in Brazil physically suffer because a legal fiction called 'Brazil' has to 'pay' a financial tribute to equally fictitious banks (and nothing physical actually changes hands in this latter transaction).

Art and Fashion



DEENHAMS, OXFORD STREET
Ben Rice New Zealand

'The pleasure of writing, of producing, makes itself felt on all sides; but the circuit being commercial, free production remains clogged, hysterical, and somehow bewildered; most of the time, the texts and the performances proceed where there is no demand for them... so that kind of collective ejaculation of writing, in which one might see the *utopian* scene of a free society (in which pleasure would circulate without the intermediary of money), reverts today to the apocalypse.'

Roland Barthes (1)

'... our entire contemporary social system has little by little begun to lose its capacity to retain its own past, has begun to live in a perpetual present and in a perpetual change that obliterates traditions of the kind which all earlier social formations have had in one way or another to preserve.'

Fredric Jameson (2)

The tendency toward an apparent 'end of History' implied by the remark from Fredric Jameson given above can be traced, despite its prominence within recent debates on postmodernism, to at least the middle of the nineteenth century. A notable example is Baudelaire's well-known definition of modernity as 'that which is ephemeral, fugitive, contingent upon the occasion... half of art, whose other half is the eternal and unchangeable.' (3) This theme of the intimate relation between modernity and the rapid turnover of recent and contemporary cultural imagery can be found in Walter Benjamin's writings on Baudelaire. Benjamin presents this poet as the first artist to recognise the change in the status of art which came about in the nineteenth century. With capitalism art becomes a commodity and the artist, having lost the aristocratic patronage afforded to him (4) in earlier times has to take his chances in the marketplace. It is a question of fashion, of taste. 'Taste develops', as Benjamin puts it, 'with the definite preponderance of commodity production over any other kind of production.' (5) 'Fashion', he elsewhere remarks, 'is the eternal recurrence of the new.' (6) History thus treads water as commodities repeatedly, and with an ever-increasing rapidity, circulate, dissolve and reappear.

As for the current situation: it would seem that with regard to 'postmodernism' as a label designating 'our' times the prefix *post* is, as David Frisby suggests, somewhat premature. (7) 'History' has of course continued to take place - we are no longer immersed in the nineteenth century but Baudelaire's succinct account of modernity has not been rendered obsolete. Mass culture, a novelty in Baudelaire's day has for us become the norm, the general background as it were. Despite considerable developments its general function has not changed. As Roland Barthes suggested in 1973: 'The bastard form of mass culture is humiliated repetition: content, ideological schema, the blurring of contradictions - these are repeated, but the superficial forms are varied: always new books, new programs, new films, news items, but always the same meaning.' (8) Even ideas have been reduced to the status of fashion. (9)

In their article 'The Invasion of Exchange' (10) The Pleasure Tendency attack the recent trend of emphasising the (supposed) virtues of self-management within the workplace. Managerial decentralisation and the dissemination amongst workers of free shares does not equate, despite the apparent advantages of this 'pop socialism', with anything which could seriously be termed a genuinely progressive mutation within capitalism. Alienation remains. I use this term in the sense that is given to it and in the following quotation from Alain Touraine:

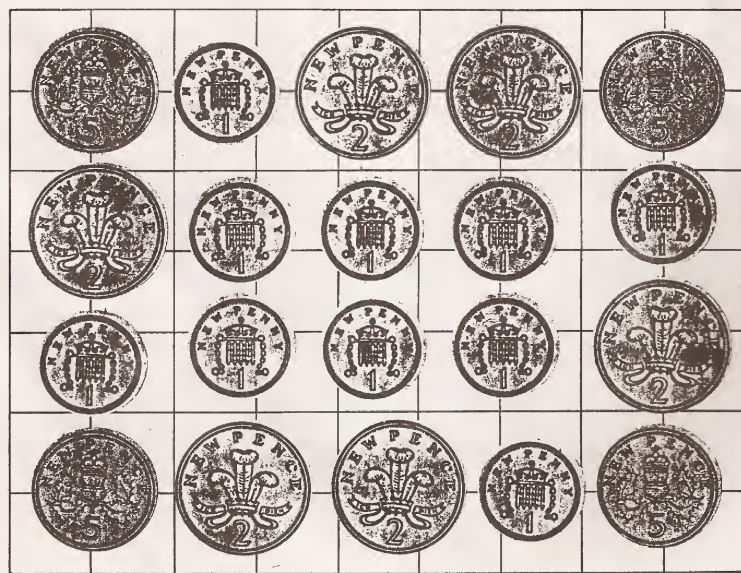
'Alienation means cancelling out social conflict by creating *dependent participation*. The activities of the alienated man make no sense unless they are seen as the counterpart to the interests of those who alienate him. Offering the workers, for example, participation in the organization of an industry without their having authority over its economic decisions leads to alienation... Ours is a society of alienation, not because it reduces people to misery or because it imposes police restriction, but because it seduces, manipulates, and enforces conformism. (11)

Thus capitalism is a 'liberal' affair but this liberalism is a particular *modus operandi*, one which, beneath the flag of a free market ideology obscures, confuses and frustrates genuine differences, rigorous particularities, intense desires. Mass culture gives a forced unity to the dissolution and flux of 'society' by keeping the boundaries in check: 'Mass culture is a machine for showing desire: here is what must interest you, it says...' (12) Touraine is correct to stress the alienating effects of post-industrial culture. Whichever way one turns one encounters the

same dull logic of the commodity, the same crude (but successful) recuperation of the unorthodox, the same flattening out. What we encounter today is the extermination of all activities and interests which are outside the margins of profit. That which cannot be inscribed with a price and which therefore refuses to become part of the spirit of the age of exchange is assiduously erased. Precisely at the point when the state of technology makes possible a widespread release from the workplace without a fall in productivity as an inevitable result there appears the ideology of worker as petty capitalist. This worker no longer has time to be concerned with leisure (which is in any case the institutionalised form of 'free' time within capitalism); rather, he or she feels forced to devote themselves, bracketing their reluctance, to their job, since their new position of pseudo-power gives them the impression that they are working for themselves, that the profits lost or gained are - as The Pleasure Tendency explain - their own, and not the bosses', pleasure or regret.

In contradistinction to the confusion over who is working for whom, and for what, it would appear - at first sight at any rate - that artists would occupy a clearly defined position or standpoint. Artists produce for themselves, that is, *for nothing*. Wealthy members of society accumulate works of art as signifiers of their overabundant bank accounts. That's one function of art in this mediocre culture, a signal, certainly tautological, of the Wealth of Wealth. But another and more important task of art is its critical function. To ascribe art with the job of criticism is to suggest that the meanings and values in circulation are of a fairly limited nature, that they are biased, and that they thereby do a 'political' job. These meanings are presented, as I have suggested above, throughout a mass media but they are perhaps most apparent within the imagery of advertising.

Despite its current sophistication advertising, via a 'stolen' and insipid surrealism which may give an impression of novelty and refinement, presents the viewer with the most banal of meanings, the most 'clubby' of jokes (which of course 'everyone' manages to 'get'), and with a taste for 'the good things in life', for a lifestyle and personality which has as its main attribute the fact that it can be purchased. To be happy, one is led to believe, is to be in tune with fashion, to receive and re-transmit the most contemporary of signals. Certain writers promote the idea that it is possible to be at one and the same moment both critical of



advertising and a good consumer. Along with some currents of so-called postmodern art advertising is offered to the 'feminist' (?) audience of *Women's Review* as some kind of radical tool or philosophical prop which justifies the stream of novelties, 'proves' the authenticity of fashion:

'If we are to learn anything theoretically from the debates on post-modernism, or practically from what image-makers are now doing, it is that the old has to give way to the new repeatedly - that we must use the past to make and unmake the present. (13)

Suzanne Moore thus pats capitalism's naturalisation of novelty on the back as though History really had stopped, had frozen in a manner which enabled the subject to cut out and keep any particular set of juxtapositions (of cultural styles, clothes, mannerisms, values) he or she liked. The forced turnover of advertising, films, 'art' somehow becomes the way things are, not the way things are made to appear. Advertising is here depicted as some kind of social service which lets it be known that the changes one is forced to concern oneself with are inevitable, and in any case only the ground for a liberal, cheerful combination of signs. No need for social transformation because we can all make our own meanings: 'there is real pleasure to be had in spotting what's going on, in being fooled and surprised.' (14)

There is a great amount of chatter about how everyone knows that the trick is a trick. That one can spot the intertextual references within advertising is not to suggest that the mechanisms of capitalist trickery, the devices of alienation, have become any more transparent or (thereby, perhaps) any less oppressive. Capitalism is aggressive in the way it limits, despite a puny liberality, the range of values on offer. Advertisements have to be slick and simple in their implications because with the intensification of commodification the aim is to index (very) young people to dedicated consumption, to destroy any chance that they might find the goods on offer - and what they have to do to get them - not quite to their taste. It was already apparent to Adorno and Horkheimer over forty years ago that 'The triumph of advertising in the culture industry is that consumers feel compelled to buy and use its products even though they see through them.' (15) The task of art then, insofar as it too has not already been totally caught up in the myth of a natural and inevitable transformation of the market, is to emphasise not the more transient side of Baudelaire's equation but, rather, the permanence and relative coherence over time of concerns which cannot be edited into mere financial profit, 'equivalence.' In one sense this is only to suggest that artists should emphasise their idiosyncrasies and indulgences, refine (and not repudiate) activities carried out for their own sake. Now that art is becoming but one more aspect of the culture industry, a spectacle carefully diluted in galleries and 'popular' exhibitions whose theme is an alleged return to the quiet and esoteric 'professionalism' of the head-in-the-clouds painter or sculptor, a move away from the politicisation of the 1960s (16), it is important that artists disturb - in many different ways - the complacency of ready-made meanings. Art should become once again something not entertaining but suspect. If I may quote Barthes once more: 'The artist', he tells us in his essay on Antonioni,

'is... threatened, not only by established power... but also by the collective and always latent opinion that a society can get on very well without art: the artist's activity is suspect because it disturbs the comfort, the security of stable meanings, because it is at once extravagant and gratuitous, and because the new society, in search of itself by many different systems, has not yet decided what it should think, what it will think of *luxury*. (17) In the face of a society perpetuated by stereotypes this is a call for vigilance.

Peter Suchin

Notes

1. Roland Barthes, *Roland Barthes*, 1975/1977, p. 81 (Dates refer to original publication and, where relevant, the translation. Page numbers are for the latter).
2. Fredric Jameson, 'Postmodernism and Consumer Society', in Hal Foster (ed.), *Postmodern Culture*, 1985, p. 125.
3. 'The Painter of Modern Life', 1863, in Charles Baudelaire, *My Heart Laid Bare*, 1986, p. 37.
4. I use the masculine to follow Benjamin's usage. This 'slant' isn't followed below.
5. Charles Baudelaire *A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*, 1969/1983, p. 104.
6. 'Central Park', included in *New German Critique*, No. 34, Winter 1985, p. 46.
7. See his *Fragments of Modernity*, 1985, p. 272.
8. *The Pleasure of the Text*, 1973/1975, pp. 41 - 42.
9. Cf. Eugenio Montale: '...ideas have become a form of commodity; one puts them on and takes them off at the first change of fashion.' *Poet in Our Time*, 1972/1976, p. 36.
10. In *Here and Now*, No. 4, 1987.
11. *The Post-Industrial Society*, 1969/1974, p. 9.
12. Barthes, *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments*, 1977/1978, pp. 136 - 137.
13. Suzanne Moore, 'New Meanings for New Markets, *Women's Review*, No. 18, April 1987, p. 27.
14. Ibid.
15. *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 1944/1979, p. 167.
16. i.e. with 'conceptual art'.
17. 'Caro Antonioni...' in *Art and Text*, No. 17, 1985, p. 46.



The Third Assault

A Note Concerning the Contemporary Conditions for the Practice of Critique

A Contemporary critical practice which aspires to raise the issue of social transformation necessarily has to be consciously inserted into the present concrete historical context. The definition of this context includes a recognition of the shifts and changes which constitute the relation of the present to the past. Failure to acknowledge such movement condemns the resultant theoretical work to the status of anachronism: thus, formally perfect pastiches of the 'revolutionary classics'; broadsheets urging the storming of the Winter/Westminster Palace; and also riot-analysis which substitutes Broadwater Farm for Watts whilst leaving the rhetoric untouched.

To go beyond this, contemporary criticism has to consciously and explicitly develop and present itself as the theory of the *Third Assault*.

This implies, first, a distance from earlier critiques appropriate to different historical situations, that is, the recognition of a periodization which identifies three eras in the theory and practice of revolution. The object of assault remains constant at the conceptual level: the society of commodity production and consumption. The aim remains constant: the abolition of such societies. The nature of the theory and practice varies.

THE FIRST ASSAULT embraces the classical workers' movement of the 19th and early 20th century, and finds the core of its theory and theoretical method in Young Hegelian philosophy: Feuerbach, Marx, Stirner. The defeat of this assault by social democracy, Bolshevism and Fascism establishes the terrain upon which the Second Assault has to mount its challenge.

THE SECOND ASSAULT begins with the final ebbing of hopes for European revolution on the 'classic' model in the Post-World War 1 years. The founding statements of its distinctive approach appear in 1923/4: Korsch's *Marxism and Philosophy*; Lukacs' *History and Class Consciousness*; Breton's *First Surrealist Manifesto*. These texts establish the basis for the theoretical work of Adorno, Horkheimer, Marcuse, Benjamin, Lefebvre, Castoriadis, Lefort, and ultimately the Situationist International. The social practice of this movement is manifest in its second phase as the 'youth counterculture'; the French occupations movement; the Italian Autonomists (in problematic relation to the theory).

What is inadequately recognised is that this assault suffered, in the last 20 years, a defeat as definitive as that suffered by the First Assault. This lack of awareness is revealed not in the recognition that there have been 'setbacks' since the late 1960s, which is widespread, but rather in the fact that old modes of struggle continue to form the core of such anti-commodity society activity as persists. A true recognition of the contours of that defeat is the pre-condition for the launch of a Third Assault. The thought of the possibility of a Third Assault is the pre-condition for the development of revolutionary critique and practice *here and now*. Part of the true recognition resides in absorbing the fact that the Third Assault stands in relation to the Second Assault as the Second Assault stood to the First Assault. Two consequences follow:

The new initiative inherits the terrain left by the defeat of the previous movement. So, the Second Assault developed in the context of the emergence of parliamentary parties of the working class, and of welfare-state economies, themselves predicated upon working class passivity, itself the consequence of the defeat of the First Assault. Similarly, the Third Assault must develop in the context of the authoritarian appropriation of certain themes of the Second Assault, consequent upon the failure of the latter to successfully impose its perspectives on its own terms: So, anti-statism becomes a rhetoric of Thatcherism, whilst the diverse issues of anti-racism, feminism, participatory systems of administration, become rhetorics of municipal socialism.

Second, the theoretical perspectives open for use shift. This shift has two aspects. Since the overall trajectory of the earlier Assaults end in defeat, there is no longer obligation to accept any conventional hierarchy of status embedded in received opinion as to the relative merits of various theoretical advances achieved within their development. Thus, within the First Assault, for present purposes, Fourierism, may come to stand as more central than, say, Fabianism. Similarly, a reassessment of the Second Assault may find more contemporary relevance in Artaud than in Sartre.

The other aspect that opens up is the need to move beyond the oppositions generated by the previous perspective. To The First Assault, figures such as Nietzsche, Weber, Freud were primarily opponents; anti-socialists; yet to the Second Assault their insights were of crucial relevance, and were incorporated into the new perspective. Similarly, to the Second Assault, in its guise as 'existential Marxism', the prime theoretical enemy was structuralism, yet to the Third Assault it seems likely that work developed from a relation to the structuralist camp - the work of Foucault, Derrida, then the work of Baudrillard, Deleuze, Lyotard, will be of great importance.

The major trap to avoid when the Third Assault perspective is accepted is simple regression, that is, recognition of the decline of the Second Assault causing a nostalgic return to the First Assault rather than the development of the new Third Assault. A prime example would be Anderson's critique of 'Western Marxism', which concludes with a rallying cry for a renascent Trotskyism. Acceptance of the Third Assault perspective necessitates as a priority an engagement with re-reading 'from the outside', an external analysis, of the work of the Second Assault. It is noteworthy that Korsch and Lukacs' 1923 landmarks were re-readings of the First Assault. The other need is analysis of the oppositions which fall outside and against the Second Assault, but may stand in a different relation in terms of the Third Assault, as mentioned above: the question of the usefulness of post-modernism arises here.

Traces of the Third Assault perspective are already present by implication in some of the analysis put forward by *Here and Now*, *The Pleasure Tendency*, and *Smile*. It is to be hoped that this introduction to the ongoing work of the Third Assault, by making explicit what has to date been implicit, may contribute to the clarification of possible points of parallel development undertaken within and beyond these groups.

Gus McDonald
Third Assault

'New' Social Movements

It has become commonplace today to suggest something is wrong with Left political theory, philosophy and action; at least within theoretical parlance even if the minds and actions of 'activists' lag behind those 'abstract' considerations and debates which attend this scepticism. Given the continued reluctance on the part of the proletariat in *Western* capitalist societies to express any enthusiasm for its historically allotted role as harbinger of socialist revolution and thus realise 'its' destiny as historical subject, this can hardly be surprising.

Arising out of and partly in response to this impasse in anti-capitalist thinking and action, a new kind of *substitutionism* has evolved in academic and political circles predicted upon an alleged terminal of decline of possibilities, dynamism and activity amongst the proletariat of Western Europe and North America. This 'substitutionism' takes the form of an argument that the new social movements have substituted for the proletarian class as the subject of historical change. On the other hand, the new social movements, from Solidarity, 'Citizens' Movements' and Third World Squatters' movements to the Peace Movement, the Greens, and the Women's Movement, are seen as fundamentally different from the old Labour and Workers' Movements in that they are not imbued with a historically necessary destiny, neither are they seen as necessarily representational in their organization, structure and nature. Indeed it is argued that they break with traditional group-formation in the precise sense that individuals gravitate towards them in ever-shifting alliances and identities rather than being 'members' within a hierarchically structured organisation with its constituency of cadres, representatives and party; the participants 'find' the movement rather than the movement seeking out its 'members' and potential members. These social movements, then, are no longer expressions of group or sectional 'interest'.

My strategy in examining the new social movements is not to reiterate academic analysis with its endless typologies, 'structural formulas' and descriptive contrasts between the old and the new political movements, but to circumvent this type of approach (despite its many insights) by instead looking at actual *experiences* of individuals and groups in strategically important areas of extensively and intensively commodified society, and how these experiences have connected to 'political action'. By 'strategically important areas' I mean sites of contestation, conflict and

struggle in and around processes of commodification: sites -situated social relations - where commodity relations or 'the invasion of exchange' have consolidated, been strengthened or weakened and power-relations which accrue at these sites are made explicit and are experienced and recognised by the actors in the situation. My purpose in pursuing this strategy is to discover if any judgement can be made about conflict potentials in advanced capitalist societies, specifically whether we can detect sustained anti-capitalist values and dispositions within the new protest movements (feminism, black struggles, environmental, democratic and other 'new' social movements) and what are the likely outcomes for this type of opposition. Finally, what does an examination of new social movements tell us about the nature of 'political action' in advanced 'post-industrial' capitalism?

Much of the academic analysis suggests the new types of conflict and potential for conflict expressed in social movements arise through a more or less direct confrontation between 'civil society' and 'the state' with traditionally 'economic' (class) struggles playing a subordinate or marginal role. Conflicts and disparities between sectors and social groups emerge on the terrain of the state itself - they cannot be deduced from the relation to the means of production of the relevant actors.

Examples of what this means are the predominance of social rather than economic demands amongst public sector workers such as miners who have fought for the preservation and coherence of ways of life, community, solidarity and 'use-value' of energy production (sustaining so-called 'uneconomic' pits). Or, teachers who have a primary concern with the conditions, purposes and quality of the education system. Again, the welfarist middle class of social and community workers, welfare rights workers, health workers, and bureaucratic workers in general themselves employed by local states or central government engage in struggle to affect or change the policies and purposes of state bureaucracies. Teachers, health workers, civil servants, and miners' strikes and actions fall within this category as do local policy initiatives around 'equal opportunities', 'race relations', 'multi-culturalism', 'anti-racism', 'anti-sexism', and municipal socialist initiatives generally, in which the GLC, Manchester, Sheffield and Liverpool figure prominently. Furthermore, these bureaucratic (and anti-bureaucratic) forms are themselves but the institutionalised expression of wider issues evoked by the new social movements of feminism, black identity and opportunity, gay rights, the peace movement etc.



Joanne O'Brien/Format New Society

At this point, for the sake of clarity, I think it is crucial to distinguish between bureaucratic expressions and forms - that is, the positions occupied within local and national state institutions unions, associations etc. by individuals who 'represent' some of the concerns expressed by social movements, and, on the other hand, the constituencies of the social movements themselves. That is, *between* a 'NEW PARASITOCRACY' of Womens' and Race Officers, Welfare and Community Workers and the like and their 'DEPENDENT' populations in urban ghettos, schools, universities, prisons, the welfare system, local authorities, hospitals etc. The corollary of this distinction in Public Sector industries is, on the one hand, the parasitocracy of union leaders like Scargill and the movement of (mostly young) miners on the other in the 1984 Miners Strike*. To say that representation of claimants by welfare advice workers, women by womens' rights officers, black by 'race' officers, gays by equal opportunities officers, working class housing estates by community workers etc. is a form of bureaucratic recuperation is to state the obvious. However, the theoretical analysis suggests much more than this; it wants to deduce a critical theory of the dynamics of welfare-bureaucratic capitalism from an analysis of new political conflicts as expressed in new social movements. Ultimately it seeks to develop a 'new' critique of commodity relations and 'find' an evidential basis for this theory amongst the disparate allegedly anti-capitalist values and dispositions found in new social movements. It is to this problem I now want to address my remarks.

Generally, academic analysis wants to argue there is no necessary correspondence between the economy and the political system, and by virtue of this there is a non-correspondence between economic/distributional conflicts and the constitution of the social identities of social movements and their collective actors. A basic consequence of this 'post-marxist' axiom for understanding the formation of social movements is that 'militant conflicts' i.e. those which articulate non-integratable and non-recuperable demands, are most likely to occur amongst 'residual' sectors of the population. These sectors are precisely those which exhibit most distance from the wage-labour/capital relation and are characterised by their degree of 'de-commodification' - that is, where income and living conditions are determined directly by bureaucratic-political means. Therefore, those sectors where 'politically' determined prices, incomes and conditions dominate: educational, welfare, health and administrative resourcing, wages and payments - generate conflicts which are explained on the basis that such bureaucratic-administrative forms represent the most advanced forms of erosion of the commodity form within capitalist exchange relations. Because in these sectors the bureaucratic mode organised around demands for use-values is de facto pitted against the capitalist/free-market mode organised around exchange-values, then somehow conflicts in these areas trigger and focus a type of political struggle orientated towards overcoming the commodity form in demands for use-values.

The trouble with this analysis is that a cursory glance at the Thatcherite project of the 1980s supplies powerful evidence for the thesis - a project which has set out explicitly to *recommodify* all sectors of society, does indeed support such predictions and prognostications because sectoral struggles have increasingly revolved around privatisation and attempts at 'recommodification'. Capitalist state intervention *has* had the unintended consequence of creating spheres of potential decommodification where exchange relationships and values are undermined, 'taken out' of 'neutralised' market determination of price and value and made visible and culpable as state-political (rather than market) measures. Teachers, social workers, housing bureaucrats *do* enter into qualitatively different social relations with school-children, the poor, and tenants, than their opposite

* Interestingly the support for the strike outside the coalfields came from the sectors and categories described as belonging to new social movements and *not* traditional union members in other industries.

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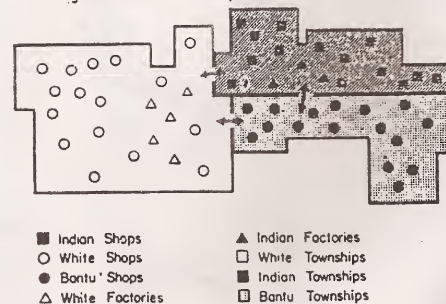
numbers in market-orientated sectors. Similarly, school children and their parents, tenants, welfare recipients, the unemployed *experience* these services as 'citizens' rights' unmediated by market eligibility. The Thatcherite project, predicted as it is on the state's fiscal crisis - the claim that the state is no longer able to balance its books without a massive increase in wealth production to sustain public expenditure - is an attempt to *re-socialize* 'society' towards a market mode, thus letting the state 'off the hook' of ever-rising (and 'unaffordable') expectations and costs. On this basis, then, the evidence appears to support the N.S.M. theorists.

However, this type of analysis which purports to be 'post-marxist' ends up, I would argue, firmly within Left-Labourist/Social-Democratic assumptions and frameworks, on the one hand, or 'Identity-Exclusion' Politics on the other, depending on which side of the dividing-line: PARASITOCRACY or SOCIAL MOVEMENT? the theory rationalizes.

The Left-Labour/Social-Democratic consequences of the theory refuse to acknowledge *the relationship between social movements and their recuperation through strategies of crisis-management*. Thus, the 'expressive culture' of British Black struggle becomes retranslated into 'positions' for black managers of 'culture' engaged in a range of activities from 'race' awareness training to media hype. *This relationship suggests the new Social Movements are a conveyor belt for a new parasitocracy.*

On the other hand, those consequences of the theory I have identified as 'Identity-Exclusion' Politics amount to an endorsement of collective identities attached to 'naturalistic' and generic categories of age, sex, race, region and nation. Here a politics is generated based solely on whichever 'bit' of one's

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identity seems to offer most strategical advance. One's 'womanness' or 'blackness' or 'gayness' becomes the basis of political self-election and identity. Solely by virtue of 'being' a woman, black, gay, 'belonging to' a particular region, place or nation, - this somehow in itself guarantees through *this* particular social experience a universal, panoptical vision of the nature of commodity society, or at least offers a 'knowing-about' social injustice. 'Natural' identity becomes the basis of social movement political identity and struggle; groups make mutually competing claims for the generic status of their own category: 'women', 'black', 'gay' become synonymous with universal knowledge/experience. Whichever variable of self-identification is chosen all other variables are excluded in these attempts to corner the market in oppression. Without going into the tautological nature of *this* kind of politics, it suffices to say that the statement 'I'm oppressed' carries with it no necessary vision beyond fragmented, parochial and defensive concerns.

These 'political' orientations associated with the new social movements are two sides of the same coin; Left-Labour/Social Democratic and Exclusion-Identity Politics are both options within a framework of state interventionism in which struggles - from consumerist-based issues of conservation and preservation to fully-fledged social movements - have interacted with central and local state interventions to form contestations defined in

terms of *non-political* cultural 'values' and collective 'identities' attached to *pre-political* 'naturalistic' generic categories of age, sex, race and territory/community. No doubt this has occurred because state interventionism has increasingly made 'nature' and 'human nature' itself an object of state policy. This can be seen in vastly increased spheres of management, laundering, manipulation, and surveillance of both physical (eg. nuclear power programmes) and human resources, including the psychic aspects of the latter (from Y.T.S. through to 'therapy'). But again the type of analysis on offer to explain these dynamics - that state intervention into areas of social life previously left to the 'private' sphere and cultural tradition has had the unintended consequence of 'denaturalising' and politicising such spheres - is flawed: the personal is *not* political, certainly not in the unmediated, direct relationship between private life and politics evoked by the NSM's - 'lifestyle', Black, Gay and Feminist politics will not find the *sources* of social injustice in the *effects* of commodity society, and the *effects* of social injustice. Cultural, sexual, religious and stylistic choices *are* indeed private dispositions and orientations - they cannot be the stuff of genuinely *political* movements whose concerns must be social and collective organisation discursively explored within a genuine public sphere.



The disorganisation, ascription or categorisation of these taken-for-granted subjective orientations and dispositions need to be opposed on the basis of protecting and enhancing a private life and its orientations and diversity: ultimately this means protecting and enhancing a cultural freedom in which anyone can choose to express, make love and live in any way they are disposed, providing these choices do not transgress social and material responsibility and morality. To 'politicise' sexual or cultural orientations merely delivers up identity to surveillance, manipulation and subjectivist critique of 'behaviour'.

Although NSMs are a reaction to this 'internal colonisation' of everyday life, that is a bureaucratization and commodification of life through administrative and political actions, they at the same time risk becoming co-conspirators in the very process of rationalization they purport to oppose. The accomplishment of massive surveillance of the population which also enhances the targeting of 'suspect' or 'unreliable' sectors - youth, blacks, inner city and council estate populations, 'activists' etc. is actually helped along by virtue of the form of struggle characteristic of the NSMs. Strategies include recuperation through professionalization processes involving welfare and social workers, youth trainers and workers, technicization of the police - the development of 'expert cultures' which alienate the informal communicative infrastructures of everyday life. The 'care and concern' ideology of the members of these 'expert cultures' derives from the fact that many were themselves schooled in NSM political action.

Finally, the basic problem for the NSMs is the form of struggle and nature of the demands they elect. By their very form and nature the NSMs are bound to fail politically. I have already suggested some of the reasons why: their preoccupation with subjectivist identity politics; the ease with which they succumb to Left-Labour/Social Democratic political frameworks (witness the history of the relationship between the Labour party and the Peace Movement, from outright betrayal to the absurdity of 'Nuclear-Free zones'; witness the absurdity also of Brent's presentation and implementation of 'anti-racist' policies etc.). But more important, NSM mobilizations generated around 'collective consumption' struggles (commodification of urban living and services) stay firmly within the commodity form in that where use-value is opposed to exchange-value this relies on a notion of dependence upon bureaucratic provision, still *paid for*, albeit 'collectively'. Discussion about 'value' itself has hardly begun. How are these administratively-provided services to be 'paid' for? What is to be 'valued'?

NSMs tend to be locally-based and territorially-defined, focussing as they do on the search for cultural identity and the defence of subjective interaction in a particular setting - e.g. 'the neighbourhood', 'the community' become both the source and the object of struggle, whether defined ethnically, sexually, or geographically. These concerns relate to a form of demand for

political self-management defined as increased power for local government (sic), neighbourhood decentralization and urban self-management. It is difficult to envisage how this subjectivism, localism and territorialism can add up to anything particularly effective other than offering opportunities for nation states to identify, monitor and assess their populations.

NSMs are signifiers of 'discontent' towards which state apparatuses can 'choose' or 'not choose' to direct policies and resources - always symbolic, and sometimes repressive ones. Insofar as NSMs continue their overriding concern with the *duree* of everyday life - its locales, milieux, co-presences at the level of face-to-face interaction in communities and neighbourhoods, then their concern is solely with how power appears at the level of everyday interaction settings and organisation in particular time-and-space contexts. Insofar as participants sustain an overriding sense of *being* in time and space as a condition of specific political practices *delimited* by the physical constraints and enabling of the *body* and the milieu in which it moves - that is, a sense of their womanhood, blackness, gayness, territorial identity: insofar, then, as participants *experience* social and collective life solely as what is 'present' to them: *insofar as these types of social construction of what constitutes authentic political practice dominate and structure the nature of the new social movements, then they will not succeed in effecting social transformation.* The wider national and international forces and movements which prop up commodity society will remain untouched.

Social Movements encourage the fragmentation and parochialism of oppositional ideas but do not offer moral imperatives with the vision and scale adequate to the problems of the contemporary world system. The vision and purpose of the old social movements were nearer to this. Although today their analysis and practice are moribund they did, at least, ask utopian questions concerning the *universality* of social justice.

Colin Webster

Notes

Some of the academic theorising on New Social Movements can be found in:

J. Habermas 'New Social Movements' *Telos* 49 1981.

A. Touraine *The Voice and the Eye* 1981.

M. Castells *The City and the Grassroots: a cross-cultural theory of Urban Social Movements* 1983.

K. Eder 'A New Social Movement' *Telos* 52 1982.

Open Letter

The post-election dissection of voting trends has thrown up the suggestion that 1987 was a 'watershed' election.

1979 owed much to the mis calculation of Callaghan delaying till after the Winter of Discontent. 1983 was inflated by the 'patriotic' appeal of the Falklands and the non-marketable Labour Leader, Foot. 1987, it is argued, illustrated the underlying social and demographic changes hastened by 'Popular Toryism'.

Crudely this is termed the North/South divide. This, however, can obscure different elements of the 'Thatcherite' strategy towards the class structure and their political expression. Only Scotland, Wales and the North-East saw appreciable uniform swings in Marginal seats. Hence such as Calder Valley, Bury or Hyndburn preserved Tory members in Yorkshire and Lancashire despite small regional swings to Labour.

The much publicised redevelopment of Docklands in E. London (& spreading to Liverpool and Glasgow) has had little electoral impact. Moreover the Wandsworth model is typical where a Tory Borough has artificially manipulated electoral gains in Battersea through the selling-off of Council Estates. Labour's shortfall of seats in London and the Midlands, and 'third party status' throughout the South (excluding the major urban centres) is illustrative of a 'New Realism associated with the dominance of finance, sunrise and service sector accelerated development.

It has also been engineered in harmony with policies of home ownership, council house sales and all the Security-conscious aspects of an outlook where anything other than narrow self-interest is an aberration (such as the media fundraising of Band-Aid).

As a small (and not sufficiently vocal) minority we can not hope to overturn such massive social change. We should, of course, seek to understand it, in all its complexity. What we can do is target the areas where our outlook might find a response.

"The Right to be Lazy" may yet have its day as a popular rallying cry in that Government plans are proceeding fast to conscript school leavers and bludgeon the under 25's into YTS, JTS and such like. On top of this Poll Tax, starting in Scotland with the term Community Charge, will reinforce even greater resentment amongst the young and less advantaged.

Instead of counterposing the new realism with old realism (of Welfare-ism 'A New Deal' of Public Works), the space will present itself to win support, through actions and communicated material for an Anti-Exchange philosophy of life. In the urban centres we should, with urgency, help articulate appeal to the disenfranchised.

In housing, land and many other areas where Tory policy is having a greater impact (often with the overt co-operation of Labour Councils), there is the scope to challenge such a philosophy amongst the great majority for whom it has no apparent relevance. In Glasgow, for instance, this means well researched opposition to the Garden Festival, City of Culture, re-development of dockland corridor and zones for the so-called 'Yuppies'.

A more vigorous and self-confident approach could be adopted to debates and public discussions (as will be the case in Glasgow within the forums organised by the 'free university' in the near future).

Such opposition, reawakening the realm of the political and public sphere, could be repeated nationwide, albeit adapted to different local circumstances. This would amount to a 'watershed' for those presently trapped in their armchair or cynical 'indifference'.



Reviews

Probably because of the resonance of the 1968 movement, the waves of oppositional movements which arose in France in December 1986 - January 1987 came as a pleasant surprise to many radicals: "France had begun to waken up after years of agonising sleep". We have received several pamphlets collating the leaflets of these times.

Interrogations Sur Le Mouvement De Decembre 1986 (no price, published by L'Insecurite Sociale, B.P. 243, 75564 Paris Cedex 12) and *Des Tracts en Decembre 86: A Propos des Manifestations Etudiantes a Paris* (no price, published 29/1/87 by La Sociale, C.P. 209, Succ. N, Montreal, Canada H2X 3N2), as their titles suggest, concentrate on the December movement protesting against the proposed change in student status, a movement which escalated when subjected to incompetent State repression. Both pamphlets consist mainly of leaflets distributed during the demonstrations, much the same material appearing in each.

For example, many of the most interesting leaflets of the student wave were produced by *Les Lascars*, a group of technical college students for whom grievances about university selection standards were irrelevant. *France Goes Off The Rails* gives some background to this and indicates tensions between "the student movement" proper and those trying to create a more generalised movement.

The pamphlet's material on the rail strike contains interesting material on the background of the dispute and the attempts to keep the strike movement free of control by union or party and to break through the sectional contempt of different groups of railway workers for one another.

The overview sections in *France Goes Off The Rails* serve to limit any "Our ideas are in everyone's minds" triumphalism which might come from contemplating a set of neo-Situationist leaflets. The limits of such leaflets, particularly when they float free from actual involvement, are discussed. So too is the contrast between France, where independent leaflets (of which those of *Les Lascars* are exemplary) are the norm in any movement, and Britain, where any tradition of producing such leaflets (as in the early 1970s) has died out. Can there be a movement which doesn't explicitly produce, exchange and criticize such radical theory? What then of the relative social crises in Britain and France?

Perhaps this magazine has an unhealthy fascination with periods of reflux. However, it would be interesting to know about the levels of communication after the immediate movements had died down: for example, about any interventions by *Les Lascars* in the rail strike or since.

"If it's the start of something, something difficult to define, it's doubtlessly a 'creeping' process whose consequences won't necessarily appear immediately. Time will tell..." (*Interrogations Sur Le Mouvement*).

Theses Against Cynicism published by the Pleasure Tendency May 1987 is very dense and cryptic but attacks a syndrome which, as the pamphlet argues, is the dominant ideology of the present day. The phenomenon of everyday cynicism and its political, psychological, and moral consequences is undoubtedly of central importance. Quote: Thesis V "Cynicism among revolutionaries provides for their eventual defection. They have their excuses ready-made by blaming 'the system' for all the unscrupulous behaviour which cynicism makes inevitable".

SAE to: P.O. Box 109, LEEDS LS5 3AA

Other material recently received includes:

Etcetera (in Spanish) from:

Apartado de Correos 1.363, BARCELONA

Schwarzer Faden (in German) from:

Postfach 7031, GRAFENEU-1, FGR

Pravda 3: translated reprints of Portuguese post-Situationist magazine. 50p from:

BM Blob, LONDON WC1 3XX

Know Your Enemy: pamphlet on Class by A. Revan/SPLAT. £2 from:

5 Cadbury Road, BIRMINGHAM B13

Class on War on the Home Front: on WW2 and Glasgow based anti-parliamentary communism. £2 from: Raven Press,

75 Piccadilly, MANCHESTER M1 3XX

Common Sense: academic 'do-it-yourself' theory journal, 68pp. £2 (+ postage) from: M. McDonald,

15 Leven Terrace, EDINBURGH

Counter-Information: now up to issue 15. SAE to P/H 81

43 Candlemaker Row, EDINBURGH

Echanges Digest & Pannekoek pamphlets from:

BM Box 91, LONDON WC1

Processed World Issue 19: Articles include analysis of Transient employment; small is not beautiful; cartoons etc. non US sub. \$15 from:

41 Sutter St. 1829, SAN FRANCISCO

CA 94104, USA

Written in Flames: Naming the British ruling class. Sequel to the notorious 'Who Owns Leeds'. I-Spy Productions.. £1.50 from:

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Vicar Lane, LEEDS 1

Lobster No. 14 imminent. Investigative Research, Parapolitics. Fullst available account of the Peter Wright/MIS story in No.

11 Sub. £4 from: Robin Ramsay,

17c Pearson Ave, HULL HU5 2SX

In a change from our normal practice, this issue of *Here & Now* has been put together by a group of collaborators in West Yorkshire. Distribution will, for the most part, remain with the *Here & Now* collective in the West of Scotland.



THE WORKER'S MAY-POLE

[An offering for May-Day 1894 from
Walter Crane]